

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR ABERAVON, 1893.

MR. MAYOR AND GENTLEMEN,

I have pleasure in submitting to you my report upon the sanitary condition of Aberavon Borough during the year 1893.

In calculating the averages, I estimate the population at 6750.

Births. The total number of births registered was 264, of which number 123 were boys and 141 girls. The birth rate would be 39.1 per 1000; but a more correct birth rate would be arrived at by excluding from the total, six births where death ensued almost immediately after birth, and this amended birth rate would be 38.2 per 1000. There were five illegitimate births during the year.

Deaths. The total number of deaths registered at all ages was 155, and this number may be subdivided as follows :

Under the age of 1 year ...	...	...	45
Aged 1 year and under 5 years ...	...	...	25
„ 5 years „ 15 „	...	...	11
„ 15 „ 25 „	...	...	25
„ 25 „ 65 „	...	...	28
„ 65 „ and upwards	...	...	21

Of the above, 81 were males and 74 females.

The death rate estimated on the above numbers would be 22.9 per 1000, but this does not give a fair mortality rate, and to arrive at this, the following deaths should be deducted from the total, viz.: 2 cases of Congenital deformity, incompatible with the prolonged maintenance of life, (a) Anencephalus; (b) Congenital heart disease; 4 other cases of death immediately after birth; 1 case of suicide; 24 deaths from drowning in the Aberavon boating disaster of Aug. 7th, 1893,—this series of deaths occurred amongst holiday makers residing out of the district. On deducting these 31 cases, the number of deaths would be reduced to 124, and the amended death rate would be 18.3 per 1000.

Zymotic death rate. Of the seven principal Zymotic diseases, the forms which have given rise to fatal cases are :

Small Pox ...	...	2	Measles ...	...	17
Scarlatina ...	...	2	Diarrhoea ...	...	6

Making a total of 27 deaths, and yielding a Zymotic death rate of 4 per 1000.

Infant Mortality. The rate of Infant mortality—that is the proportion of deaths of infants under one year to births registered, amounts to 170.4 per 1000.

Summary. For purposes of comparison, I will recapitulate our averages :

	Aberavon rate per 1000, 1893.	Corresponding mean rate of Glamorgan Urban Sanitary District, 1892.	Corresponding rate of England & Wales, 1892.
Birth rate ...	38.2	36.8	30.5
Death rate ...	18.3	18.	19.
Zymotic death rate ...	4.	2.2	1.9
Infantile mortality ...	170.4	168.6	147.

Notifications The cases of Infectious diseases notified during the year were :

Small Pox ...	...	9
Scarlet Fever ...	...	83
Membranous Croup...	...	4
Erysipelas ...	...	16
Continued Fever ...	...	1
Typhoid Fever ...	...	2
Puerperal Fever ...	...	4

Making a total of ... 119

It now remains to consider the principal diseases we have encountered during the year :

Small Pox.

Nine cases of Small Pox were notified during the year. The first case came under my notice in February,—the patient, a farmer residing in the adjoining parish of Margam, came to stay at the Angel Inn, and shewed symptoms of illness on Jan. 28th; five days later, (on Feb. 2nd,) I was notified that he was suffering from Small Pox, and all available measures were adopted to try to prevent the disease spreading. The house was fairly well adapted for isolation, the inmates were vaccinated, the children and other members of the family were removed, and the business of the Inn was carried on without communication with the patient and his attendants.

From this source a second case appeared in the person of a labourer living in Cwmafon Road; this man was a frequenter at the Angel Inn, and acquired the poison there; he exhibited symptoms of illness on Feb. 23rd, and died on Feb. 26th. I was notified of this case an hour after death occurred, and I instructed the Inspector of Nuisances to disinfect the house and the body. The body was buried in less than 24 hours, and the house was fumigated and disinfected, and the bedding and infected clothing burnt.

The next case was notified on March 18th; the patient was the son of the last case; he had been vaccinated in infancy, but declined re-vaccination. After the termination of this case, the same measures were taken to disinfect and purify the premises, and this was the last of this series of cases.

On October 31st, a fresh case appeared in Sandfield Road; this patient's wife was attacked the following week, and a week later the latter's sister, living in Richard Street, was found to be suffering from the same complaint. The mode of origin of Variola here is interesting and instructive :

A Marine Engineer was, when nearing England, seized with Variola on board his vessel; he was removed on arrival to a Small Pox Hospital at Gravesend. About a month after admission, I am informed, he was discharged, and he returned to his home which is situated in the adjoining Urban Sanitary District of Margam, but within a stone's throw of our boundary line—the river Afan; in due course after his return, his wife was found to be suffering from Small Pox, and during the progress of her illness she was visited by the three persons mentioned above, all of whom were relatives of her's.

The next case appeared on Dec. 5th, and this patient, almost to a certainty, acquired the disease indirectly from one of the previous cases; the disease here was of a particularly virulent form, and the case terminated fatally on the 14th day.

On Dec. 30th, two fresh cases appeared, and I then learned that the last-mentioned case had been visited amongst others by his sister, a married woman, she acquiring the disease and also conveying it to her son,—the mother died on the 5th day.

I regret to say that these were not the last cases, and at the time of writing no less than 14 fresh cases have had their origin from the preceding ones.

In the preventive treatment of these cases, antiseptic fluids and oils were freely supplied and used. The importance of vaccination and re-vaccination as preventive measures was urged upon all who were likely to come in contact with infected persons or things, or who resided near infected dwellings, and a large number of persons have availed themselves of the advantages of re-vaccination with very satisfactory results, for in no cases have re-vaccinated persons acquired Small Pox, however much they may have been associated with the sick persons as nurses or attendants.

Infected bedding, clothing, and linen have been freely destroyed, and disinfection by fumigation has also been carried out under the personal supervision of the Sanitary Inspector.

In the preventive treatment of these cases of Small Pox, two valuable adjuncts have been sadly wanted, viz. : a hospital for isolating cases, and a disinfectant.

Without a Hospital it is positively hopeless to attempt to isolate cases of Small Pox in a workman's cottage, the attendants on the sick, I find, can only rarely be depended on to prevent the anxious and the curious from approaching even the bedside of the sick; promises to isolate the patients are freely made and as freely broken, and it is only when some valuable lives have been lost through such ignorant conduct or culpable neglect of duty, that some people can be brought to believe that Small Pox is really infectious, and that it is spread by germs.

Without a Disinfecter it is impossible to disinfect clothing, bedding, &c., efficiently, the germs of Small Pox are extremely tenacious of vitality, and without a proper Disinfecter, one cannot carry out complete disinfection except by burning, which is a costly proceeding, and of course ruinous if carried out on a large scale.

Scarlatina. This fever was with us during the first half of the year only. In all, 83 cases came under my notice, and they appeared as follows :

January, 11 cases.	March, 9 cases.	May, 18 cases.
February, 16 „	April, 15 „	June, 14 „

There were two deaths, one in March and one in April. This epidemic was a continuation of that which appeared in 1891, which gave rise to 36 cases in 1892, and which terminated in June, 1893.

The large bulk of the cases resided in the Sandfields district, and about one-third of the cases occurred in Wern Square, Mansel Terrace, and Velindre.

Printed handbills were distributed in infected houses, giving directions as to disinfection, and the use of antiseptic baths and oils was strongly urged, but nothing like efficient isolation could be carried out; and the schools, too, seemed to be a ready medium of spreading the fever, children from infected houses being admitted to school when they should have been vigorously excluded.

Measles. Measles was very prevalent during the year from May to December, and it caused no less than 17 deaths,—15 of these were under the age of five years.

Here again, children convalescent from this complaint and children from infected houses were allowed to attend the Elementary Schools, when they should really have been kept at home, and the disease in consequence, remained in our midst longer than it should have done.

Typhoid Fever. There were two cases of Enteric fever. The first case was that of a man who worked in a colliery at Abergwynfi, where, in the Autumn, Typhoid was rather prevalent. Later on, his wife contracted the disease through nursing him; both recovered, and the disease did not spread. It will be noted that this fever did not originate in the borough.

Influenza. There were three deaths from Epidemic Influenza during the year. This complaint has prevailed during the greater part of the year, and the deaths referred to occurred during the months of May, September, and October.

Phthisis. There were 8 deaths from Pulmonary Consumption, and this number is higher than what we usually see in this borough.

There are three conditions which, in Aberavon, appear to foster Consumption, viz. : damp dwellings, badly ventilated rooms, and overcrowding.

Overcrowding. The matter of overcrowding should receive the early attention of the Sanitary Board, for it is a serious matter, and there is no necessity why there should be any overcrowding in the town. There has been a considerable impetus given to the building trade recently, and there are many new houses in Aberavon awaiting tenants, or which could readily be placed in a condition ready for their reception.

I would suggest that a house to house visitation be made, and where overcrowding exists, that steps be taken to abate the nuisance.

Cancer.

There were five deaths from Malignant disease during the year.

Water Supply.

The water supply of the borough continues to be good, and to this fact we have to attribute our continued immunity from Typhoid fever. During the exceptionally dry summer we experienced the disadvantages which attend a limited supply of water, and seeing that the population is rapidly increasing, I think the time has come for the Corporation to consider the propriety of enlarging the reservoir by Ynis-y-gwâs.

Sewerage and Drainage.

During the year some instances cropped up of faulty laying of drainage, and I am glad that this matter is receiving at the hands of the Surveyor, the attention it deserves, and that he is particularly careful before passing new drains in connection with new buildings in the district.

When water was plentiful the sewers were well flushed, and they were also disinfected with Sulphate of Iron during the hot months.

Dairies, Cowsheds, Milkshops, & Slaughter houses.

The Dairies, &c. have been visited at intervals during the year by me, and on the whole their condition has been satisfactory, and when I visited the Slaughter-houses, they appeared to be clean and well kept.

Common Lodging houses.

The Common Lodging-houses are well looked after by Police Inspector COLE, and when I have visited them, I have found nothing to complain of.

River pollution.

During the hot months, the bed of the river Afan became particularly foul and gave off very offensive odours, and the result of an enquiry showed that the river and its tributaries received the greater part of the refuse and sewage and surface water of Glyncoirwg, Cymmer, and Cwmavon. All these villages are populous, (the last-named having about 5000 inhabitants), so it can be well understood that a very undesirable and dangerous state of things has hitherto existed, and also obtains now.

There is nothing more objectionable than having an open sewer running through our town, and that is what the river Afan practically is, and this pollution of the river must be productive of ill health to many of those people whose houses are built on the river banks.

This matter has been brought before the notice of the Local Government Board, and I hope that this pollution of the river will soon be a thing of the past.

This may be tabulated as follows :

		Inspections made.	Informal Notice served by Inspector.	Legal Notice served by Authority.	Nuisances abated.
Dwelling Houses and Schools.	{ Foul conditions	70	35		35
	{ Overcrowding	3	3		3
	{ Unfit for habitation	3	3		3
Lodging houses .....	.....	14			
Dairies and Milksheds .....	.....	4			
Cowsheds .....	.....	10			
Bakehouses .....	.....	5			
Slaughter houses ...	.....	82			
Ashpits and Privies .....	.....	200	10		10
Deposits of refuse and manure ...	.....	5	5		5
House Drainage.	{ Water Closets	216	26		26
	{ Defective taps	80	8		8
	{ Other faults	12	12		12
Pigstyes .....	.....	60			
Offensive trades .....	.....	1			
Other nuisances .....	.....	22	22		22
Precaution against Infectious Disease.	{ Lots of infected bedding destroyed	3			3
	{ Houses disinfected after Infectious Disease.....	40			40

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

J. ARNALLT JONES,

Medical Officer of Health.

